

WHAT ARE THE DIFFERENT APPROACHES THAT CAN BE USED TO MAKE OUR RADIO PROGRAMMING INTERACTIVE?

There are a number of different ways that you can build interactivity into your radio programming. This component highlights the most promising approaches that are currently available, what is needed to integrate them into your programming, and how to effectively implement them. In addition, it includes suggestions for other ways that you can disseminate your radio programming without relying on radio airwaves.

COMPONENT GOALS

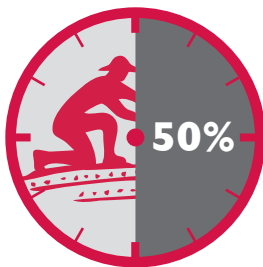
BY THE TIME YOU HAVE FINISHED THIS COMPONENT YOU WILL:

- ✓ *Understand what role your staff can play in supporting effective interaction.*
- ✓ *Have selected the interactive method(s) you will use.*
- ✓ *Have developed a plan to implement those methods.*

DESPITE BEING TRADITIONALLY SEEN as more of a one-way media source, increases in mobile phone penetration across Africa and advances in other technologies have made it much easier to turn radio into an interactive media outlet. Interactivity here refers to interactions between the listener and the radio station, the listener and development organizations, and listeners with each other. Although the tendency may be to think primarily in terms of increasing listener interaction with the radio station, it is important to look at the other types of interactivity as well. This is because each type of interaction has the potential to facilitate learning and support change differently.

When thinking about the potential for interactivity, think about the benefits that can be had by all parties involved. Radio stations may gain increased listener loyalty, listeners may benefit from increased learning, and your project may benefit from gaining a better understanding of farmers' needs. Ideally, the interactive methods that you use will be crafted in a way that captures all of these benefits.

There is no one best approach to interacting with your audience. To begin to decide on how to best interact with your target audience, you need to develop a clear picture of who they are. This can be done using the questionnaire you developed in **Component 2** to help you create a profile of your audience. Whether or not your target audience have access to mobile phones or are literate will be significant determining factors for you in deciding what type of interactivity you want to use.



Research on rice farmers' access to rural radio in Benin found that half of the farmers rarely or never listened to radio programming on agriculture. The reason stated by the vast majority of these respondents was that those programs are broadcast during times that were not convenient for them.

You should also keep in mind when and how people are listening to the radio. For instance, research on rice farmers' access to rural radio in Benin found that half of the farmers rarely or never listened to radio programming on agriculture. The reason stated by the vast majority of these respondents was that those programs are broadcast during times that were not convenient for them.¹ Of course, you may be somewhat limited in choice of time slots depending on the radio stations you are working with. They may not want to give up a prime slot for agricultural programming. This is worthwhile knowing as well. If only half of your target audience have access to radios during the live broadcast time, you will want to consider additional ways to share those programs with them.



Women who listen alone are **1.6 times** more likely to call in to radio stations than women who listen in a group.

How people are listening to radio can also be helpful to you as you decide how you plan to interact with them. Research by the Search for Common Ground in Sierra Leone, Liberia, and Guinea, for example, found that women in those countries often listen to radio with friends and family, but that women who listen alone are 1.6 times more likely to call in to radio stations than women who listen in a group.² This data suggests that if most of your audience listens to the radio in groups that you may need to be more creative about how you interact with them to encourage active participation.

¹ Zossou, E., Vodouhe, D.S., Van Mele, P. and Lebailly, P. Linking farmers' access to rural radio, gender and livelihoods: case study of rice processors in Benin (2012). [Accessed on 7/9/12 at: http://www.agroinsight.com/downloads/Articles-Agricultural-Extension/2012_AE2_Linking-farmers-access-to-rural-radio-gender-and-livelihood-Zossou-et-al-2012.pdf]

² Fortune, F., Chungong, C., and Kessinger, A. Community Radio, Gender & ICTs in West Africa: How women are engaging with community radio through mobile phone technologies (July 2011). [Accessed on 7/9/12 at: http://www.radiopeaceafrica.org/assets/texts/pdf/2012-Community-Radio-Gender-ICT_SFSG.pdf]

It is important to also consider whether women have equal access to radios as men in the communities you are targeting. The same Search for Common Ground study also noted that “while radio reach and listenership [among women] is increasing, men are still more likely to listen.”³ Studies have shown, however, that when women are provided equal access to resources, it benefits overall household productivity.⁴ Implementers of USAID-funded projects should also consult the USAID Gender Equality and Female Empowerment Policy, which was released in March 2012, for further guidance on gender inclusive programming.⁵

HOW CAN WE MAKE OUR RADIO PROGRAMMING INTERACTIVE?

Once you have an understanding of the profile of your target audience, you can determine what the most appropriate ways to interact with them may be. This section looks at seven of the most common methods of interaction.

-  **1. CALL-INS**
-  **2. CALL-OUTS**
-  **3. SMS**
-  **4. VOICE MESSAGES**
-  **5. INTERACTIVE VOICE RESPONSE (IVR)**
-  **6. FACILITATED LISTENING**
-  **7. WEB-BASED PLATFORMS**

³ Ibid., p. 6.

⁴ See reports from the International Food Policy Research Institute entitled, “Women: The Key to Food Security” and from the OECD entitled, “Women’s Economic Empowerment,” which can be accessed online at: <http://www.ifpri.org/sites/default/files/pubs/pubs/ib/ib3.pdf> and <http://www.oecd.org/dataoecd/50/60/47561694.pdf>, respectively.

⁵ The full policy can be found online at: http://usaid.gov/our_work/policy_planning_and_learning/documents/GenderEqualityPolicy.pdf

You can use the **Interactive Method Selection Worksheet** at the end of this component to help you to determine which method or methods are most likely to reach your target audience, and whether you have the capacity (both time and money) to use each method. This worksheet is an adaptation of the **ICT Option Assessment Tool** found in **Component 2**.

The most sustainable types of interactivity will be those managed by your radio station partners. Once your project begins to manage interaction, you create a giant barrier to long-term sustainability. That is not to say that your project staff should not interact with your beneficiaries, but the lead should be taken by the radio stations. The process of deciding on which interactive methods to use, therefore, should be done in conjunction with your radio station partners. Your role is to inform them of what is possible, to help them set it up, and to support them, but the ongoing implementation should be with them.

The following is a description of each of the methods and how they can be used to interact with farmers. Specific information on the hardware requirements and estimated costs for some of the options listed here can be found in **Component 6**. Each method also includes a visual matrix that provides a snapshot of some of requirements and interactive potential of each one. The matrix presents a general overview of this information based on typical conditions of smallholder farmers in sub-Saharan Africa. It is not an exact science, as variations in local capacity, costs, and hardware availability exist both between and within countries across the region. For example, you may work in communities with a high internet penetration, whereas this matrix assumes low access to internet by smallholder farmers. Despite that, it should provide you with a comparative look at the requirements and benefits of each option.

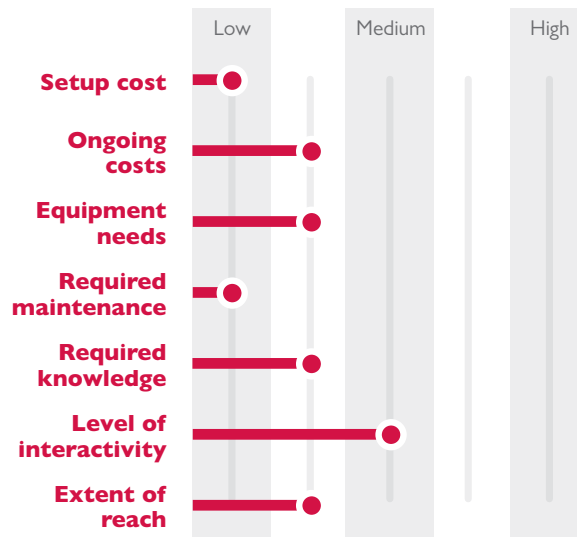


Check out Farm Radio International's study entitled *The New Age of Radio: How ICTs are changing rural radio in Africa* for detailed assessments from the field of many of these options, online at: bit.ly/farmradioict.

Many of the interactivity features below are framed with a focus on interaction around agronomic information programming. Interaction need not only be limited to agronomic information programs though. You can also use many of these methods to collect market price and/or weather information from trusted sources from within your target area, which can then be broadcast on the air. There has also been some experimentation done linking buyers and sellers together via mobile phone, which you could incorporate into market price programming to enable listeners to advertise offerings on the program and negotiate deals. One of the major challenges that you will face with creating the platform by which buyers and sellers can communicate, however, is a lack of trust. Unless you are willing to serve as a broker to guarantee payment and delivery, in many cases both buyer and seller may be hesitant to seal an agreement without first meeting in person.



CALL-INS



Overview: Call-in programs are probably the most well-known example of radio interactivity. They involve listeners calling into the radio station directly. Most call-ins are received on-air by the announcer either in real-time or with a slight delay, although they can also be done by playing recorded messages from listeners on the air. Call-ins can be structured to allow listeners to share their opinions or experiences on specific subjects or ask experts questions.

Best used: Call-ins work well to provide audience feedback or questions during interviews with experts, panel discussions, or straight talk segments. Game shows structured around call-ins can also be a great way to engage with your audience. It is also possible to use this method at the end of a pre-recorded segment, such as a skit or a documentary, to solicit audience reactions or questions. This will give listeners a chance to dig deeper into the topic and share their own experiences. You can also use call-ins to collect localized market price and weather information from field agents or other trusted sources.

Interactivity: Primarily between select listeners and radio stations. It is also possible to use call-ins as a way for listeners to interact with your organization or local development partners, although this is most practically done by receiving and responding to recorded messages in conjunction with the radio station.

CASE STUDY

WHY APPROPRIATE TECHNOLOGY MATTERS

The Kenya Agricultural Commodity Exchange Limited (KACE) developed a weekly 15 minute radio broadcast called Soko Hewani that advertised commodity requests and offers on the Kenya Broadcasting Corporation. Listeners interested in bidding would call a short code that linked to KACE's market call center. Although KACE had to pay for radio airtime, they anticipated being able to offset these costs through revenue share they received from the mobile network operator for calls placed to the

short code, and through commissions from optional brokerage services they provided. The broadcasts were so successful that the number of listeners calling in frequently jammed their phone system. This led to frustrated callers who could not get through, and a loss of revenue to KACE. As a result, KACE has had to temporarily suspend the program until they can find an appropriate and cost-effective solution that meets their call-in demand.

Requirements: At a minimum, the radio station will need a phone on which to receive calls. Some stations simply use a mobile phone on speakerphone held up to their microphone for this. Although this is certainly the cheapest option, it is not ideal for a couple of reasons. First, the sound quality will not be great. Second, and perhaps more importantly, if you only have one phone line, callers will likely need to call back dozens of times before getting through, which could discourage participation.

For a clearer audio setup, you will need to connect the phone into the mixer, usually by way of computer. To overcome the challenge of only having one line, you may want to consider a second backup line that you also connect into your system, although you will need to make sure to have enough audio inputs on your computer and mixer to handle this.

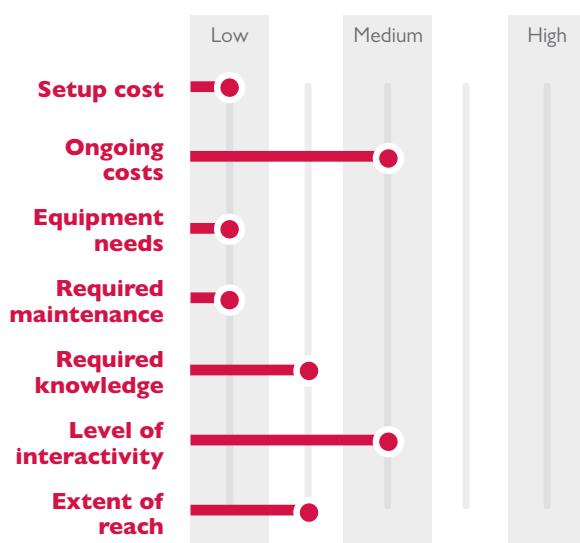
You can also connect multiple SIM cards into your computer using a GSM Gateway, such as the 2N External Routing Machine. Another option is the GRINS radio automation system developed by Gram Vaani in India, which has integrated telephony that enables users to connect up to four SIM cards to manage phone calls both live and through recorded messages. All of this gets a bit complicated, so you will want to make sure to work with a trained technician to set up a phone system appropriate to your needs.

Other considerations: Call-in programs tend to put the burden of cost on the listener, who will need to use their own airtime to call-in. Some of your listeners may not have the money to cover this cost, and therefore will lose out on the potential interactivity. Where possible, you may want to consider setting up a toll-free number for callers to use. This can be paid for by your organization or the radio station, or in some cases you may even be able to enter into an agreement with mobile operators to provide a line free of charge.

Also keep in mind that call-in segments need to be well managed. Ideally, someone at the radio station should pre-screen callers to make sure that

they know to turn off their radio in the background and to ensure that they are calling about something relevant to the subject being discussed. Hearing farmers like themselves call in to a radio program can be a great way to capture the attention of your audience, although it is also easy to lose the attention of your listeners with irrelevant or overly long calls.

CALL-OUTS



Overview: Call-out programs are similar to call-ins, except that in this case the radio station places calls to listeners instead of asking listeners to call in directly. Call-outs can also be used to reach out to experts for either on-air commentary or to pre-record segments. In addition, your organization or your partners may also provide the phone numbers of farmers with specific questions or stories that were shared during field visits that you would like to share with a broader audience.

Best used: Call-outs are an effective way to interact with your audience in a way that is more controlled than call-ins. If you have already identified farmers with questions relevant to a panel discussion or interview that is being broadcast, call-outs can be used to bring those farmers on-air. This method can also be used to solicit audience comments or questions on pre-recorded programs, although you will want to make sure that the individuals you call were listening to the broadcast, are available, and have something constructive to add. Using the call-out method to interview farmers in advance is also a much more cost-effective way of gathering content than traveling to interview them in person.

Interactivity: The majority of the interaction with call-outs is between the radio station and the individuals who are called. Since radio station staff will not be as connected to farmers as organizations that work directly with farmers, call-outs will likely be more diverse when done in collaboration with those organizations, thereby creating a triangle of interaction among farmers, the radio stations, and your organization or its partners.

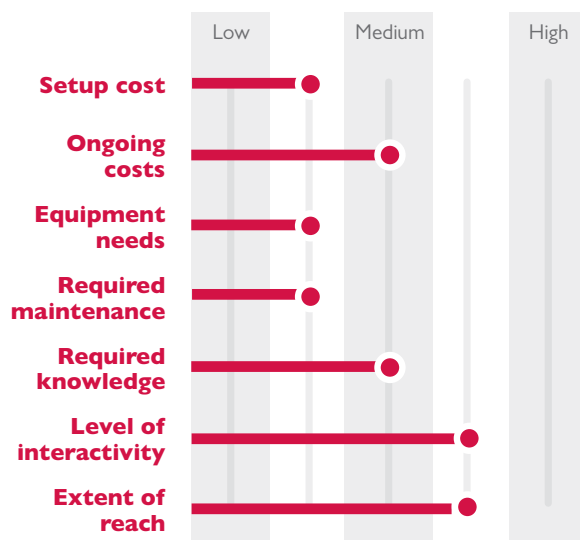
Requirements: The technical requirements for call-outs are pretty much the same as for call-ins, although you will not need to be concerned with having multiple phone lines.

Other considerations: From a logistical standpoint, you will need to coordinate with the individuals you are going to call in advance to make sure that they will be available and in a location with a decent mobile phone signal. Informing people in advance will enable them to prepare for the call and—with the possible exception of prank calling shows—always make for better conversation than cold calls.

You should also try to identify individuals who have something to share that is relevant to your audience and program. The benefit of call-outs over call-ins is that you can identify and prepare callers in advance so that their questions or comments are tailored to the overall learning objectives of your programming. Work together with your partners and the radio

stations to build up a database of farmers and experts that can be called. Building a robust database will help to make your pool of callers more diverse and representative of your audience. Inviting your audience to subscribe to your caller database by SMS or at promo events is another good way to add to this database.

SMS



CASE STUDY

USING SMS TO REINFORCE RADIO MESSAGES

In Malawi, Land O'Lakes International Development has teamed up with Esoko to reach over 2,000 farmers in the rice, cassava and small livestock value chains. Farmers receive reminders via SMS to tune-in to farmer-led weekly radio broadcasts on best farming practices. After a broadcast ends, farmers also receive a recap of the show's most valuable tips through SMS.

Overview: A growing number of radio stations are starting to use SMS messages to interact with their listeners. Listeners can send in SMSs to the station at any point throughout the program. Depending on the capacity of the station, responses may be sent back to listeners by SMS or a selection of messages may be read aloud on the air and responded to. SMS can also be used to poll your audience on a variety of topics or to send out reminders to your listeners before your program airs.

Best used: SMS can be a great way to poll your audience members on their opinions and knowledge of content, to identify new content they would like to see covered, or to vote on specific elements of your programming. As long as it is not cost prohibitive, sending out SMS reminders of programs to registered listeners can be an effective tool for increasing listenership. Farm Radio International has found that SMS alerts sent to listeners 30 minutes before broadcast can increase listenership by up to 20 percent. They can also be used to solicit brief feedback and questions from listeners related to your program, and benefit from the fact that all messages will generally be received, as opposed to call-ins where most callers will likely receive a busy signal when trying to call. You can also use SMS to send out episode highlights and to reinforce your messaging after programs air. Last, for market price and weather information programs, SMS can be used to receive updates and push out information.

Interactivity: Most radio stations that use SMS do so to interact directly with their listeners. That said, if your organization wants to interact with listeners directly about a program that you have helped to develop, you can always include a number for them to send SMSs to. If the program is broadcast after your office hours have ended, just make sure that listeners know the timeframe within which you will respond to them.

Mobile chat platforms, such as Mxit, also present opportunities to facilitate listener to listener interaction. Although they are not SMS-based, they allow for similar one-to-one text messaging, along with group chats on web-enabled feature phones. If any of these platforms are popular among your target audience, the group chat features could be worth exploring to support audience interaction with each other during your broadcasts.

Requirements: The most basic point of entry is simply a mobile phone. If you want to manage messages and contacts, create polls, and send SMS announcements to a large group of people, you will want to

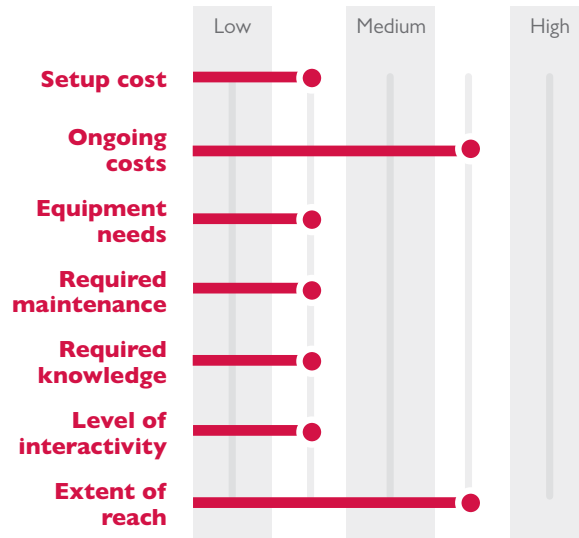
consider a more sophisticated platform such as FrontlineSMS, GRINS, or others. Hardware requirements may vary slightly depending on the platform you select, but generally you will need at least a computer and a mobile phone or GSM modem. FrontlineSMS is also in the process of piloting a version of their platform that will be more appropriately tailored to the needs of community radio stations. To facilitate interaction with listeners, you may want to also set up a SMS shortcode. This way they do not have to remember a full phone number. Check with your local mobile network operator to see what options are available in your country.

Other considerations: There are three major considerations that you should keep in mind if you plan to use SMS to interact with your audience. The first is the cost both to the listener and the radio station or your organization. Some farmers may not have enough money to afford sending SMSs to you. On the other hand, if you are going to be responding to and communicating with listeners by SMS the costs will add up on your end as well. If this becomes an issue for you, you may want to consider grouping together common questions and respond to them all at once over the air instead of individually via SMS. If you are using SMS to send announcements, you can also reduce your costs by sending messages to a portion of your contact database and asking them at the end of the SMS to share it with others.

The second consideration is the literacy levels of your target audience. Since SMS is a text-based medium, it is generally an ineffective way to reach illiterate or low-literate individuals. The case is often made that even illiterate farmers know a literate family member or friend, so this is a non-issue. This may be true, but rather than work off of this assumption it is advisable that you confirm whether this is the case for the majority of your listeners. The final consideration is length limitations of SMSs. Sharing a brief opinion in 160 characters is not that hard, but asking a complex agricultural question within such limitations could be prohibitive.



VOICE MESSAGES



Overview: Voice messages are recorded audio messages that you can broadcast in bulk. In most cases, the user can either call a phone number to record their message or record and send it via their computer. Using a bulk voice messaging service, you can specify your contact list and schedule a time for the message to be sent. Everyone on your contact list is called at the scheduled time, and they hear your pre-recorded message when they answer their phone.

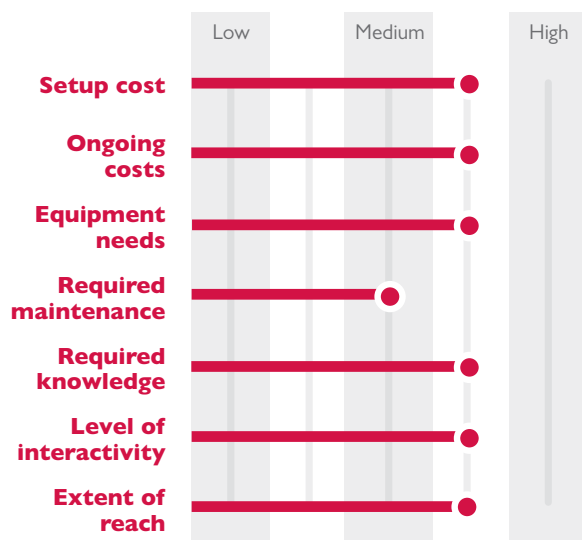
Best used: Voice messages can be used to broadcast sneak previews of an upcoming program to generate interest, or to share a couple of salient points from an already-aired program to reinforce the message. Many systems can also be set up to conduct basic surveys, such as 'Did you listen to our program on seed spacing last night? Press 1 for yes, 2 for no, and 9 to repeat this message.'

Interactivity: Generally speaking, voice messages are not highly interactive. Although they can conduct some basic polling, they are set up to be more of a broadcast mechanism than an interactive one.

Requirements: There are third-party providers that offer voice messaging services, generally based on a unit price based on the number of individuals that answer the call. Some services enable you to record your message directly over the phone, in which case all you would need is access to a phone. Other services also use web-based platforms, which require a computer and some way to record your audio into WAV or MP3 either with a microphone through your computer or separately on another audio recording device.

Other considerations: Some individuals may be less likely to answer a phone call from an unknown number. If they have never received a voice message before, they may also not be aware that it is a recording, which can lead to some initial confusion. If you are planning to use voice messages, it is helpful to inform your audience about the nature of these calls in advance so that they know to expect if an unknown number calls them. When considering third-party providers, you should also consider their pricing structure and reliability.

INTERACTIVE VOICE RESPONSE (IVR)



Overview: Interactive voice response is actually an extension of the call-in method. These systems enable callers to navigate a menu via their phone's keypad or increasingly through speech recognition. Although these systems can be confusing—or frustrating to anyone who has ever encountered one when wanting to speak to a live customer service agent—they can enable a level of continuous interaction with listeners. IVRs can be configured to receive voice messages from callers 24 hours a day whether or not a radio station or office is even open. You can also use an IVR system to play segments of your radio program on demand or to provide complementary or follow-up information.

Best used: IVR systems are best used to add an additional layer of interactivity to your radio programming outside of your regularly scheduled broadcast time. In addition to repurposing radio content that can be listened to on demand by callers, you can also create original content that is complementary to your radio programs or that engages callers with a question related to that program. For example, you may play a short clip from the program you broadcast that week and follow it with a question asking callers what they would do in that situation. If your radio program airs once a week, you should make sure to update the content on your IVR system at least as frequently. Depending on how sophisticated a system you are using, you can also use IVR to enable listeners to advertise crops they are selling and manage responses from potential buyers.

Interactivity: Most IVRs are set up to enable the operator (in this case a radio station or development organization) to interact with callers, although not always in real or near-real time. Some systems, such as Awaaz. De from India, also enable callers to interact with each other using a navigable, voice bulletin board.

Requirements: Many IVR systems require a computer and internet connectivity to connect to a remote system. If you do not have internet access, Freedom Fone offers a standalone system, although it does require a dedicated computer and a GSM device to connect to a mobile network. If you are running a standalone system, you will need to be somewhere

with reliable electricity to keep the system continuously available. More details on the technical features and costs of these devices can be found in **Component 6**.

Other considerations: Since many people in your target audience may have never experienced an IVR system, you will likely need to run an education campaign explaining to them how it works. At the very least, you should explain that the voice they hear is a recording, what features you will have available, and how the navigation works (i.e., it can only respond to specific commands). This can be done in person while your staff are out in the field, demonstrated by video, and/or explained by radio announcers on the air.

You will also need to consider who is going to be responsible for managing the system. This includes listening to, categorizing, and responding to all voicemails that are received, updating content, technical troubleshooting, and evaluating call records as part of your broader monitoring and evaluation activities, if necessary. It is important to respond to the vast majority of calls that are received, otherwise people will likely stop calling in. Most IVRs will allow you to push out recorded messages in response to callers, so categorizing similar voicemails will help you to send out one relevant response to multiple callers.

You will also need to make sure that you have fresh and relevant content on your system if you want to encourage repeat use. Farm Radio International has found from experience that most callers will listen on average for 120 seconds. This is much shorter than they would tune in on the radio, so you will need to repurpose any content from your radio program that you plan on using to meet this shorter format.

Although your project staff may help with the initial management of the system, over time you should try to transition full management to the station. Since managing and maintaining an IVR system may be new to your partner stations, you will likely need to provide them with technical assistance on how to effectively do this.

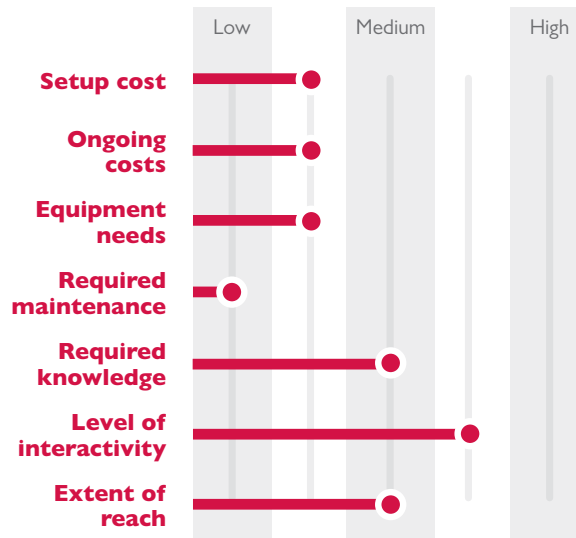
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FACILITATED LISTENING



Overview: Facilitated listening can come in many forms, but basically all involve some sort of in-person intermediary. Three of the most common examples are listening groups, radio agents, and interactive radio instruction (IRI). Listening groups are groups of people who generally meet on a set schedule to listen to a radio program. They tend to be facilitated by a group leader and include discussion and questions after the program finishes. More informal listening groups also exist and tend to involve friends and family listening to a program together.

Radio agents are individuals with recordable radios or MP3 players who charge a small fee to anyone who wants to listen to a radio program on demand. These enterprises are normally established with the support of a development organization, who may provide equipment and content to the agents free of charge or for a fee. By using a rechargeable radio with MP3 recorder, agents can decide what programs they want to

record without any ongoing input. If your project works directly in the communities you are targeting on a regular basis, you can also record material in advance and share it with the radio agents via MP3 player. Although in the latter scenario, control over content is with your office and not with each radio agent. Radio agents may also facilitate listening groups and/or allow people to listen to radio programs individually on demand.

Finally, interactive radio instruction has been used for more than 30 years in primary and secondary schools. Content for IRI is developed to support teachers in low-resource environments to more effectively engage students. Unlike the other two examples above, IRI programs provide prompts to teachers and students for specific actions throughout the program. Although traditionally used in schools, the general structure of IRI programming could be used as an additional tool for extension agents during field days or community visits.

Best used: The prevalence of facilitated listening will depend on the demographic of your audience and radio ownership rates. You may find that in communities with high radio ownership rates that people prefer to listen to programs in the comfort of their own homes. Despite this, if you have the capacity you should explore helping to establish or supporting existing facilitated listening groups in the communities where you are working.

Interactivity: Facilitated listening predominantly fosters interaction among listeners. You can also work with the listening groups or radio agents in your target area to build in interactivity with your field staff. For example, your staff can contact listening group leaders or radio agents after their scheduled sessions to answer any questions that may have arisen while they were listening to the program or to schedule follow-up field visits with specific farmers who expressed interest in learning more about a practice.



To learn more about IRI, check out the World Bank's toolkit *Improving Educational Quality through Interactive Radio Instruction*, available online at: <http://bit.ly/NhGrhf>.

NO ACCESS TO RADIO? NO PROBLEM.



If some of your beneficiaries do not have access to radios during the times when your program airs, consider the following:

- Create an MP3 player lending library hosted by your local offices or community groups.
- Work with radio agents to record programs using recordable radios.
- Push out short radio segments via recorded messages sent to their mobile phones.
- Set up an IVR system with recorded segments that callers can listen to on demand.

In Mali, Farm Radio International has also reported that Radio Fanaka is using call-outs to facilitate engagement with listening groups. At the end of each broadcast, they call out to each listening group in their broadcast area individually and give members five to ten minutes to share comments or questions on the program they just heard. This is an innovative approach at linking listening groups into a broader community via the radio.

Requirements: If you plan to help set up listening groups or radio agents, you may need to provide them with or help them to purchase any equipment they may need, such as recordable radios, solar chargers, MP3 players, and so on.

Other considerations: When done well, facilitated listening groups can also increase the likelihood that farmers will learn about and adopt new practices. You may, therefore, also want to provide training to group leaders and radio agents on effective facilitation skills along with providing them ongoing technical support.

Research from Farm Radio International conducted in five African countries has suggested that individuals who listen to radio programs with community groups recall more content and have higher adoption rates than those who listen at home or in unstructured groups with neighbors.⁶ This is similar to findings related to the benefits of facilitated learning with other ICT tools as compared to independent learning.

Granted, not all facilitation is equal, and if done poorly, facilitation may actually drive people away. Consider the following benefits of working with facilitated listening groups though:

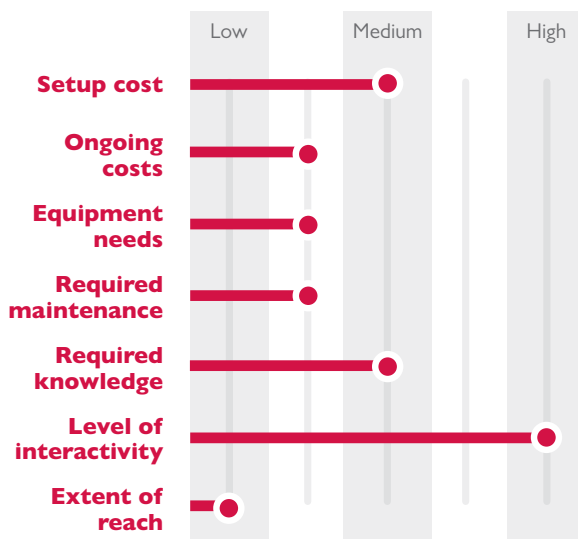
- Facilitators can answer farmers' questions or refer them to an extension agent if anything is unclear or if they are interested in learning more.

⁶ Perkins, K., Ward, D., and Leclair, M. Participatory Radio Campaigns and Food Security: How radio can help farmers make informed decisions (Farm Radio International, 2011). [Accessed on 7/11/12 at: bit.ly/farmradioprc]

- Facilitators can provoke discussion on specific elements of the radio program, increasing the likelihood that farmers will think critically about what they have just heard and therefore remember it more clearly.
- Facilitators can track attendance, questions asked, and practices tried and adopted by farmers.
- Facilitators can encourage farmers to share with and learn from each other.
- Facilitators can serve as a point of contact to collect and share farmer feedback with you on what they liked or disliked about your radio programs.

Later on in this component we will discuss some ideas for how you can prepare listening group leaders and radio agents to become effective facilitators and not just passive providers of radio content.

WEB-BASED PLATFORMS



Overview: Most of your target audience at this point likely does not have access to the internet, so this type of interactivity is probably not going to be as relevant as the other methods mentioned above. That said, given the rapid expansion of mobile internet across Africa web-based interactivity may be an effective way to interact with a small subset of your audience, particularly youth. Live streaming or posting pre-recorded programs online can be a great way to make your programs available well beyond their air date. In addition, there are a number of social features that can be integrated alongside your program on the web to enable sharing, comments, and polls.

Best used: Live streaming only really makes sense if you know that you have a significant untapped audience who would listen online instead of on the radio. If it is not cost-prohibitive for your project, you may want to consider sharing recorded radio segments online even if most of your audience does not have internet access. By placing them online, you enable listeners with access to the internet to tune in at any time to learn and share their own ideas and questions. Also, by having your content online you increase the likelihood of other practitioners outside of the broadcast range of your partner stations hearing your programming, thus potentially opening up new opportunities for collaboration and sharing.

Interactivity: Depending on how active a listening community you have online, this method can lead to high interaction between listeners and content managers. Unfortunately, it is not as simple as just posting radio content online. For starters, your radio station partners will need to have access to the internet. You will also need to make sure to use platform that is already popular or be prepared to do some heavy advertising to generate interest. You can also interact directly with listeners who have access to the internet via email, assuming you have the time to respond to them individually.

Requirements: To live stream audio, you will need a reliable internet connection and a server to host your streaming audio. To share pre-recorded content online, you will need an internet connection as well to upload content, but that does not need to be at the radio station. You can

transport the audio files on a USB flash drive and upload them anywhere with an internet connection. Before you make any decision on the best web platform to use, find out what platforms other radio stations in your country are using.

Other considerations: The primary considerations you will have to make for web-based interactivity is whether it is worth the budget and staff time relative to the potential number of listeners you would be able to engage. Even if you decide not to share audio online, you might want to consider using the web—particularly social media—to promote upcoming programs, pose questions during broadcasts, and reinforce messages after the fact. Whatever you decide in terms of web-based platforms, you will need to determine who will be responsible for the management of this content and interactions. Ideally this should be the radio station, although it can also be managed by a local partner if they are invested in helping for the long run. Even though penetration rates are still low in Africa compared to the rest of the world, there are still over 40 million Facebook users and almost 140 million internet users on the continent.⁷

REINFORCED MESSAGING

Although each of these methods has been highlighted individually, it is always important to consider how you can use multiple methods to enhance opportunities for interaction and learning. Multiple methods can be used to reinforce your messaging more effectively than a singular method. In addition to using the direct interaction methods mentioned above, you should also consider using secondary methods besides radio to communicate and reinforce your messaging.

Secondary methods that can be directly handled by the farmers (such as mobile

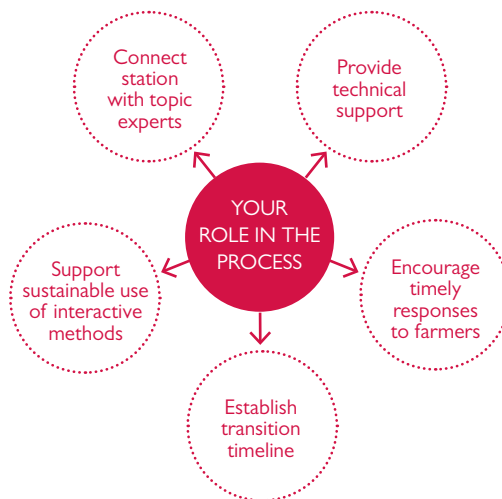
video, SMS, flyers, or tip sheets) may be particularly helpful as references that farmers can use while they are trying out a practice on their own in the field. As your radio station partners might not have the capacity to develop and use these secondary methods on their own, your project and local NGO partner staff can play a role in reinforcing the messaging of programs through these means.

The research of Hermann Ebbinghaus and others has shown that spaced repetition of information is critical to increasing the likelihood of establishing

and recalling long-term memories. If you have the capacity and resources, you might want to test the effectiveness of different primary and secondary methods by deploying them with a random selection of farmers who have listened to your radio programs to test whether their recall of information is higher than farmers who were only exposed to the primary method or those farmers who had no interaction at all. Of course, recall alone does not translate to adoption or impact, but it is an important part of the equation.

⁷ Internet Usage Statistics for Africa as of Q4 2011 [Accessed on 7/11/12 at: <http://www.internetworldstats.com/stats1.htm>]

WHAT IS OUR ROLE IN THE PROCESS?



Since you will likely want any method you choose to be sustained by your partner radio stations beyond the life of the project, it is important to consider what your role will be from the outset. In some cases, the stations you work with will already be interacting with their listeners, whereas for some this might be uncharted territory. Ultimately your role should be to support the radio stations to implement and sustain these methods over time.

In many cases, the announcers at your partner radio stations might not be agricultural experts and will find it challenging to interact with their audience in a substantive way. Even if they do have a background in agriculture, they will not be an expert on all subjects that callers might be interested in. It is important, therefore, to help them to establish contacts with topical area experts and a process by which they assign and respond to all technical inquiries. If you are working with any local agricultural organizations, you should consider linking them in to the process as well to play an ongoing role with providing topical area expertise.

Your partner radio stations may also need technical support to effectively use the interactive methods you are planning to implement. If this is the case, you should assess exactly what type of support they need to manage and maintain the method(s) they are using, and then determine how you will provide them that support. If their capacity is extremely low to begin with it can be tempting to fully manage the implementation of the method for them. While it is okay to play a large role at first, you should make sure that the station assigns at least one person on their staff who will be responsible for working with you. Work with that person to determine what training and support they need. It is also helpful to establish a transition timeline with the station—or any locally based partners who will be supporting them—with concrete steps to move all technical responsibility and oversight to their station over time. This can be incorporated into your **Interactive Method Planning Worksheet** that we will talk about later in this component.

It is extremely important that your partner stations have enough support to respond accurately in their interactions with farmers and to properly manage the interactive methods they are using. For most radio stations, their primary objective is not agricultural extension or outreach. Therefore, it will likely be the responsibility of your team or local agricultural organization partner to provide them with the support they need. Without this support, they may not have the capacity to provide accurate agricultural programming. If they do respond to farmers with inaccurate information, the credibility of the station's programming as a whole could be damaged. On the other hand, if they fail to respond to farmers within a reasonable amount of time, those farmers may feel slighted and stop listening to your programming. For the same reason, if your partner stations are not able to properly manage the technologies they are using to interact with farmers, it could have a negative effect as well.

SUPPORTING FACILITATED LISTENING

If you plan to use facilitated listening, your organization can also play a role in helping to establish groups and to train group leaders. When setting up listening groups, it is recommended to work with existing groups, such as farmer associations, cooperatives, or women's groups, rather than attempting to form your own groups. This will make coordination easier, since you will be working with an established entity. If it is not possible to work with existing groups, and if there is ample local interest, you can facilitate the establishment of listening groups in your target communities. The best way to do this is to determine where farmers already commonly congregate in the community. When setting up your own groups, be sure to explain to the farmers you invite to participate why you are trying to set up a group and what the benefits will be to them from participating.

The process of setting up independent listening groups will require additional groundwork on your part. To make the process easier, consider working with community leaders or farmer representatives to identify interested farmers. You may also want to use flyers and community broadcast outlets to advertise. It is best to enlist farmers who are interested in participating over an extended period of time. This will result in more useful data collection regarding individual farmer change. Otherwise, if farmers come and go at random intervals, it may be more difficult for you to track impact on each farmer.

Whether you are working with an established group or helping to set up a new one, you should identify one or two people from the group who are interested in leading the facilitation. This person will be responsible for helping you to collect information on participation and adoption, along with facilitating discussion among farmers once the radio program has ended. When identifying these individuals, look for someone who is:

- Trusted in the community
- Inclusive (that is, does not lecture or exclude certain individuals)
- A leader in adoption of new approaches
- Literate (if you want them to help collect information for you)
- Easily accessible (that is, has a mobile phone, in case you need to reach out to them)

In some cases groups may have self-selected their own leaders or operate more organically without any leadership. If that is the case, explain to them the ways that having someone responsible for facilitating discussion can be useful and how that person will serve as a point of contact with your team for ongoing support.

Before each program airs, you should also develop discussion questions that you can share with the group facilitators to help guide them. These can be sent out to the facilitators the day before the program airs via SMS or you can provide paper facilitation guides for several radio programs at once weeks in advance. A print copy may look something like the sample on the following page.

If you plan to work with radio agents, in addition to training them on good facilitation techniques you may also need to train them on how to use and maintain any equipment you provide them. You may also find it helpful to provide them with training on how to establish their new enterprise, including information on basic business accounting, advertising, and price determination. Small entrepreneurs can sometimes mistake cash flow for profit. Make sure that the radio agents you work with know the difference, and that they also separate their business finances from their personal finances so that can more easily keep track of them.

SAMPLE DISCUSSION QUESTIONS

PROGRAM TITLE: Dehulling your soybeans for replanting

AIR DATE: August 5th, 2012, at 8pm on Radio Mwanza

FACILITATION QUESTIONS: This program focuses on the proper way to dehull soybeans that you plan to replant. Many farmers use a stick to dehull the soybeans. This is fine if they plan to sell the beans for consumption or use them for animal feed. If you want to save the seeds for planting next season, this technique could damage the seed. Instead, you should use a dehulling machine or dry them in the sun.

1. When should you use the technique mentioned in this program?

2. What has your experience been with the impact of beating seeds on their future germination?

3. What challenges do you see having with the new technique that was presented in this program?

4. Has anyone ever tried this new technique? If so, what was your experience like?

Also, help them to build into their pricing the recovery and maintenance costs for any equipment they are using. They may not know what the costs of maintenance might be or how to account for those future costs in their current pricing, so you will need to provide them with input here.

WHICH INTERACTIVE METHODS ARE MOST APPROPRIATE FOR OUR SITUATION?

Determining which interactive methods are most appropriate for your situation depends on a number of factors, including your partner needs and capacity, who your audience is, and what objectives you are trying to achieve. Like you did with the **ICT Option Assessment** in **Component 2**, gather your team and other stakeholders together to discuss the strengths, weaknesses, and capacity needs of the different options. If you are unable to gather everyone together at the same time, consider finding time to speak with your stakeholders individually. This can be done either through informal conversations, or through more structured exchanges, such as focus groups or surveys.

There is no need to consider all of the options highlighted above. Only consider those that would be realistic methods to pursue. For example, if none of the farmers in your target audience have access to the internet, you might want to forgo considering web-based methods for the time being. Once you have decided which options are worth considering, write them down in the columns at the top of the worksheet.

Consider the following questions as part of this process:

FOR PROJECT AND RADIO STATION STAFF

- How and where are we currently interacting with farmers?
- Are the radio stations we are partnering with interested in pursuing any of these options?
- How much time does our project staff have available to implement or support interaction?

- Do radio station and/or local partner staff have the technical capacity to implement each option? If not, what will it take to prepare them?
- What are the general types of costs that will be necessary for each option?
- Are any of these clearly outside of our project's available budget or those of our partners?
- What will it take to support our radio station partners to implement each of these methods?

FOR FARMERS

- How often to do you currently listen to radio?
- What types of radio programs do you prefer most?
- What types of radio programs would you like to hear more of?
- Where do you tend to listen to the radio? At home? With neighbors? With a listening group?
- Do you have access to a mobile phone?
- Of the following options [insert options you are considering], how likely do you think you are to participate in each one? Why?

Through this process, you should be able to narrow down the interactive methods that seem most appropriate to your situation. Once you have decided upon the method(s) you will use, consider who will be responsible for overseeing their implementation. Some methods might be done by your partner radio stations with minimal to zero support, while others may require more substantial input on your part.

CONTINUUM OF SUPPORT NEEDS



You can use the **Interactive Method Planning Worksheet** at the end of this component to map out your overall plan for each radio station you will be working with. This should include the exact steps to set up and maintain the interactive methods you plan to use, the timeline for each step, who will be responsible, and what, if any, materials are required. You may also find it easier to use a different worksheet for each interactive method you are planning to use, although you can also combine them on the same worksheet if desired. If your radio station partners do not have the capacity to implement a preferred method on their own, make sure that you include capacity-building steps and follow-up in your plan as well. The sample planning worksheet provided on the next page can serve as a guide.

SAMPLE INTERACTIVE METHOD PLANNING WORKSHEET

RADIO STATION: Radio Bopulu

INTERACTIVE METHOD(S): Interactive voice response

SECONDARY METHOD(S): Flyers promoting how to use it, integration with SMS

(E.G., FLYERS, TIP SHEETS) and on-air call-out responses during radio program

FREQUENCY: Ongoing, but promoted weekly during program

REQUIRED STEPS	TIMELINE	PERSON(S) RESPONSIBLE	MATERIAL NEEDED
Set up IVR system	May 5	Project team	Cables, SIM cards, GSM device
Provide training on maintenance of system	May 5 – May 10, and ongoing as needed	Project team	Training materials and operating manual
Train farmers on what the system is and how to use it	May 1 – June 15	Project team	Demonstration videos, print materials
Promote the IVR system on the radio	Starting May 10th, ongoing	Radio station	Short script for announcers to read
Launch of IVR system	May 15th	Radio station with support from project team	
Update IVR content	Weekly	Radio station	
Categorizing and responding to voicemails	Within 48 hours of receipt	Radio station with input from project team for technical responses	
Review calling trends	Monthly	Radio station with initial support from project team	
Gather feedback from farmers on their use of the system	After 90 days, and then twice a year	Radio station with initial support from project team	Questionnaires
Make improvements to system based on feedback	Within 30 days of receiving feedback	Radio station with initial support from project team	

Once all involved parties have agreed to the action items and persons responsible in your planning worksheet, you can prepare to begin rolling out your interaction methods. Print out copies so that each partner has a copy that they can keep in their office as a reference. It is important to revisit this worksheet periodically and to have status check meetings with all involved parties. This will help you to assess whether any changes need to be made or if you need to provide any additional technical support to your radio station partners.

**CRITICAL
SUCCESS
FACTORS**

- Appropriate method(s) for interacting with your audience is selected.
- Partners are provided with necessary and appropriate technical support.
- Facilitated listening groups are encouraged to increase recall and adoption.
- Messaging is reinforced through other mediums.

NOTES

4

WORKSHEETS

Interactive Method Selection Worksheet

Interactive Method Planning Worksheet

INTERACTIVE METHOD SELECTION WORKSHEET

OBJECTIVE:

ASSESSMENT CRITERIA	OPTIONS					
	Call-Ins	Call-Outs	SMS	IVR	Web-based	Facilitated
Strengths of each option						
Weaknesses of each option						
Current staff capacity						
Potential costs						
Is this an appropriate option? Why?						

INTERACTIVE METHOD PLANNING WORKSHEET

RADIO STATION: _____

INTERACTIVE METHOD(S): _____

SECONDARY METHOD(S): _____

(E.G., FLYERS, TIP SHEETS) _____

FREQUENCY: _____

REQUIRED STEPS	TIMELINE	PERSON(S) RESPONSIBLE	MATERIAL NEEDED

